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October 20, 1993

Harold Weisberg
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Re: Hearing Before Legislation and National
Security Subcommittee of the House Committee
on Government Operations

Dear Harold:

I have been invited by Rep. John Conyers, Jr., Chairman, Legislation and National Security Subcommittee, House Government Operations Committee, to testify before his subcommittee on November 17, 1993. The hearing is being held pursuant to the Committee's continuing oversight jurisdiction with respect to the collection of records in the National Archives established by the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992.

Conyers has indicated that he would like me to include in my testimony a discussion of "the materials which have been publicly released through the operation of the Act, the materials that have been withheld or otherwise not released, and the usefulness of the Collection." Noting that one of the purposes of the legislation "was to end the governmental secrecy . . . which has fuelled conspiracy theories and baseless speculation about the assassination," Conyers also said his subcommittee would welcome my observations "concerning the effectiveness of the Act in achieving this purpose."

At present, I intend to make the following points in my testimony:

(1) The federal agencies (and Congress itself) are in violation of the Act's requirement that they make the initial cut as to what JFK assassination records should be released by August 23, 1993. Some agencies, such as the FBI, have failed to turn over to the National Archives even a single new page;

(2) Most of the estimated two to three million pages of relevant records have not even been processed, much less released;

(3) Many, if not most of the 800,000 pages said to have been made available by the National Archives are either (a) documents that were already available, such as Warren Commission records, or (b) documents that are still being withheld pending either further

processing and/or establishment of the Assassination Records Review Board;

(4) Where documents have been released to the public, substantial portions are still being withheld in some instances;

(5) Notwithstanding these qualifications, substantial new information already has been released which raises fresh and deeply troubling questions about the official Executive Branch theory of the assassination;

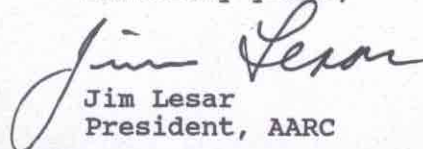
(6) This new information, coupled with the failure of either the Justice Department or Congress to follow up on the finding of the House Select Committee on Assassinations that there was a high probability that President Kennedy was killed as the result of a conspiracy, requires a new investigation by a newly created independent body;

(7) Because of the delay in nominating the members of the Assassination Records Review Board, one-half of the guaranteed life of the Review Board has been lost. Given this truncated lifespan and the apparent lack of subject matter expertise on the part of President Clinton's intended nominees, it is imperative that Congress amend the Act to ensure that it has a full three-year term in which to do its work. This point is further supported by the fact that the agencies' delay in processing and releasing records has added enormously to the work the Review Board must do once it finally gets established.

If permitted--and I think I will be--I intend to call attention to the new evidence of two shots to the head developed by Dr. Randolph Robertson and Dr. Joseph C. Riley. (I have already suggested to a staff member that Dr. Robertson and others be called to testify.

With respect to Conyers' request that I discuss "the materials which have been publicly released through the operation of the Act, the materials that have been withheld or otherwise not released, and usefulness of the Collection," I am inviting each of the persons to whom this letter has been circulated to make any suggestions as to specific matters which might usefully be touched upon in my testimony. I would appreciate it if you would submit any comments in writing as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,


Jim Lesar
President, AARC